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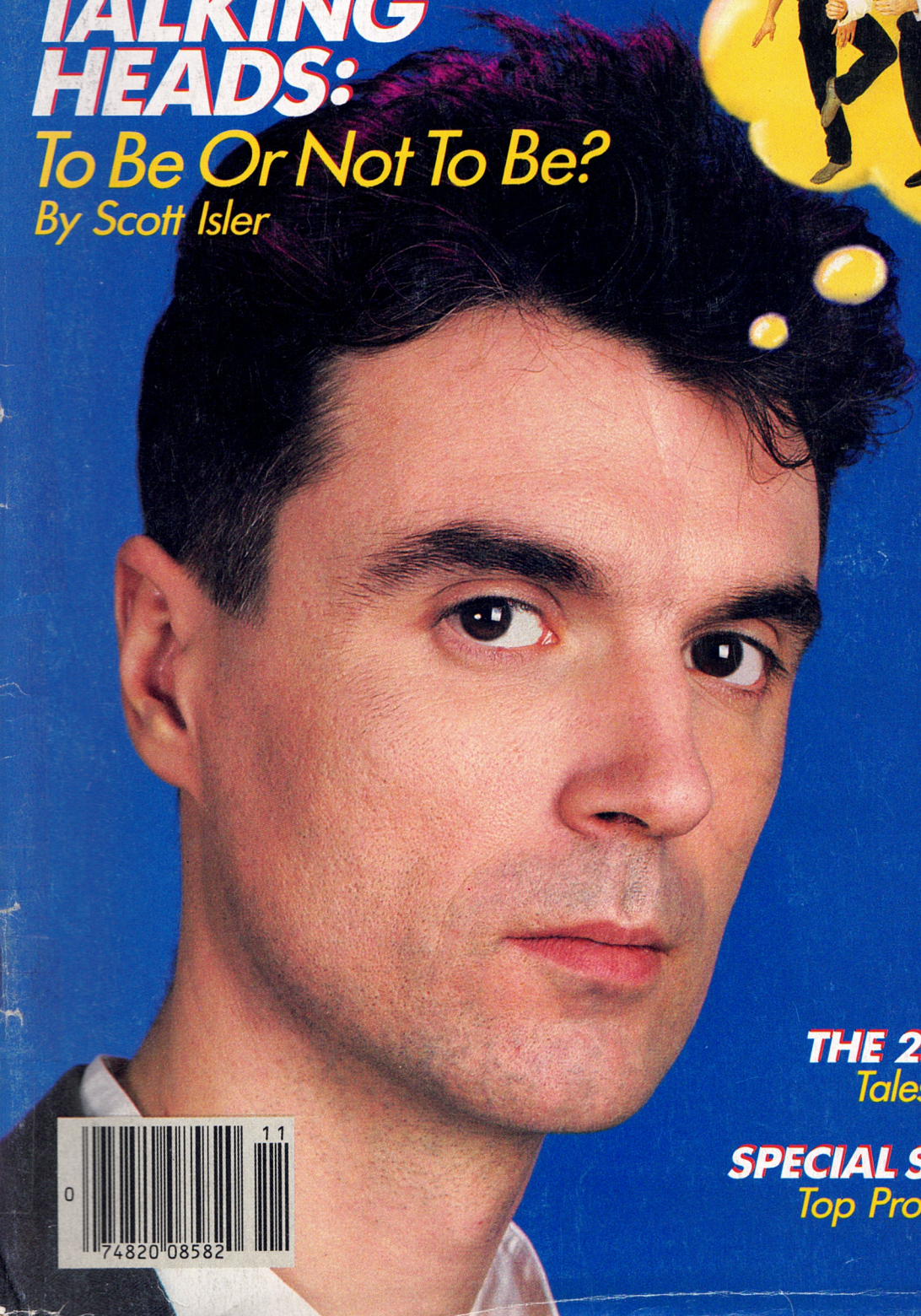
TALKING HEADS:
To Be Or Not To Be?
By Scott Isler



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How can Talking Heads be three places at once...

Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth won't do interviews together—and they're *married*, fer crissakes. So imagine what it's like to corral all four Talking Heads when the band doesn't have to be in one place. Not that groups have to live, eat and sleep together in Monkees-like harmony. But the brittleness some people detect in Talking Heads' music has been known to show up in their inter-personal relationships.

The tensions and passions of the component members of Talking Heads could fuel a mini-series. In any creative partnership, a certain amount of friction is inevitable. Talking Heads' unique situation practically invites trouble: Weymouth had no prior bass experience before joining drummer Frantz and guitarist David Byrne to create the band. They played as a trio for a couple of years before adding Jerry Harrison on guitar and keyboards. As singer and main songwriter, Byrne naturally attracts the most attention. There have been semi-public spats about song credits. The group doubled in size in 1980 to play African-influenced grooves, and was still in expanded form on their last tour, which ended a year and a half ago.

Since then they've reunited only to record *Little Creatures*, Talking Heads' eighth album, earlier this year, and to make some accompanying videos. Mission accomplished, they've scattered to concentrate on the usual plethora of solo projects. Fasten your seat belt, extinguish all smoking materials and make sure your seat is in the upright position. We're taxiing down the runway In Search of Talking Heads.

By Scott Isler

"We'd been playing these long, extended grooves for quite some time. We just changed...."
"We'd come to this tottering pinnacle. After Stop Making Sense, there was no place to go."
"We asked David, 'Are you sure you want us to play these songs? Maybe you should hire session musicians.'"

And still be a better, tighter band.

Photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe

First Stop: Head South

One hundred and two degrees. That's the digital temperature reading outside the Capital Motor Bank, and the sign is in perfect working order. This is Dallas, Texas, where citizens can boast of hellish summers to match the worst you can find anywhere in the great forty-eight. On this blazingly clear August day, to be seen outdoors is to risk being brought in for questioning. Instead, the only apparent outside activity is a torpid stream of glinting cars, windows rolled up, plowing the soft highways. A visiting Venusian would be impressed, and probably comfortable.

But appearances can be deceiving. Consider an unassuming-looking house on a shady (but still broiling) Dallas side street lined with unassuming-looking houses. You have to be within a foot of the front door to read the recently applied letters: TRUE STORIES PRODUCTIONS. Inside—air-conditioned, of course—is the hustle and bustle of a film company in the throes of pre-production. Workers dodge purposefully in and out of rooms. A mother and young daughter wait by the reception desk; the latter, in a party dress, holds an 8x10 publicity glossy of herself on her lap.

Into this show-biz microcosm strides David Byrne, looking dapper in a tan snap-brim fedora, white long-sleeve button-down shirt, white bucks and tight-legged, red-and-blue plaid pants that could have been a window canopy in a former life. He's just taped an MTV award acceptance clip. Now it's back to the obsession at hand: *True Stories*, a feature film Byrne has co-written and will be directing in Dallas.

The thirty-three-year-old Byrne is a workaholic who respects no weekends and barely takes time off to sleep. In the last year alone, besides the *True Stories* project, he has presented a performance piece; contributed lyrics to songs by composer Philip Glass; taken lots of photos ("but haven't got them organized yet"); acted in a PBS television show; and released an album of his music for *The Knee Plays*, theatrical episodes he wrote with Robert Wilson for Wilson's epic play *The CIVIL WarS*. Not to mention *Stop Making Sense*, the Talking Heads concert film directed by Jonathan Demme that debuted last year, won a National Society of Film Critics award for best documentary, and is still holding forth in repertory houses; or *Little Creatures*.

Whether to mention Talking Heads in the same breath as David Byrne is becoming a pressing question. He gained prominence as the riveting frontman of the band, but his reputation is booming not just as a solo musician (Byrne's first non-Heads records came out four years ago) but as a multi-media prodigy. His face is on the cover of *Current Biography*. He was the subject of a full-blown *New York Times Magazine* article—part of a series called "The Creative Mind"—that quoted Glass praising Byrne's "concert music, and not just the Talking Heads." Rock 'n' roll music—amusing, you know, but, well, hardly serious.

Second Stop: Head East

Ninety degrees. It *is* better in the Bahamas—barely. At least on Grand Bahama Island there's an ocean breeze to stir the heat around. Another attraction is Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz. They maintain an island retreat for summer escape between band tours and recording sessions.

Nassau's Compass Point Studios is a convenient base of operations for the Tom Tom Club, Frantz and Weymouth's part-time spin-off group. In 1982 Tom Tom Club's first album, quite unlike Talking Heads', sold half a million copies and dented street culture with the single "Genius Of Love." A year later a follow-up album did not repeat the success, but Frantz and Weymouth aren't hung up on sales figures. Currently they're planning a third album, going for long sails in the Atlantic, and raising their nearly three-year-old son Robin—not necessarily in that order of preference.

Third Stop: Head Northwest

Sixty-five degrees?? This ain't no disco! Milwaukee, Wisconsin is a mid-latitude paradise in comparison to the above hang-outs. Native son Jerry Harrison came back on family business. While in Milwaukee he's producing local

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

BYRNE ON BYRNE

Quite a few of *Little Creatures'* lyrics verged on being narrative, or came really close to having a thread from beginning to end. It seemed appropriate for these straightforward songs—although the other way could work just as well, I guess. Once you prove you can do something, you don't have to keep proving it. On *Speaking In Tongues* and some other stuff, I felt I proved people could like songs with words that made no literal sense whatsoever. Some of them did, but on the whole they were purely evocative phrases. The link between them was maybe they evoked a similar mood or sensibility. But in a literal sense there was no link. That was real difficult to do, a real challenge. It meant the words had to hold together on a purely aural level. You had to disconnect your tendency to try to make sense of them. They had to be able to bypass that.

Then it became hard to do narrative lyrics. I was forced into doing fragmented or non-literal lyrics; I found it more and more difficult to do narrative ones that didn't seem one-dimensional to me. I think if you tell a story it has to be both a story and a metaphor, and it has to sound nice rolling off your tongue. It was harder to get all the multi-levels of ambiguities into a narrative, so I did that less and started being more ambiguous. Then I felt confident enough to attempt more linear lyrics that still worked on other levels.

Sometimes the "I" in my songs is me and sometimes it's not. Or sometimes it could be me and not me in the same song. I'm always trying to revise my persona, break out of it. Once the songs are written and structured, they have a life of their own. Since I'm so close to them, I happen to have a really good idea

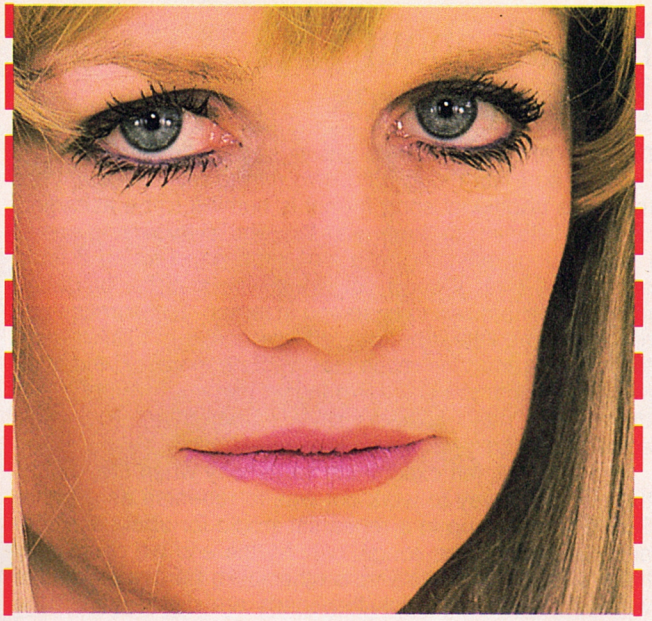
heroes the Violent Femmes, and keeping his own chops in shape by working on a solo album—his second, following *The Red And The Black* in 1981.

Prepare for Landing

Conclusion? Definitely a case of absence making the heart grow fonder. The four band members are rather disparate personalities who give the impression of appreciating each other better with a little distance. Frantz, the most easygoing Head, is apparently content to lay down a solid beat and leave theorizing to others. For this interview he was wearing shorts and a T-shirt warning "Don't mess with my toot-toot." Eternally boyish Harrison is even more earnest than Byrne. The outspoken Weymouth has no patience for pretense; she makes a lousy rock star.

Talking Heads' (and *Stop Making Sense*'s) popularity made Byrne a highly distinctive "rock star" himself. In the past he'd suffer through interviews, averting his eyes, chainsmoking nervously like an understudy for Don Knotts. Sitting in a hotel room in Dallas, however, he is relaxed, off the weed and quite forthcoming; perhaps, more than his longtime musical cronies, the teamwork necessary for film production has drawn him out. As he talks, he drinks a beer followed by a glass of iced tea—"up and down," Byrne says. After the tea is gone, he suddenly pops the lemon wedge into his mouth and eats it.

All the Heads' various solo projects no doubt provide a needed escape hatch for the abundant creative energies within the group. Byrne's vision dominates, but after eleven years together Talking Heads show no signs of breaking up. *Little Creatures* gave an excellent bill of health: Pared down to the essential quartet, they reverted to pop song structures with synchromesh arrangements bred of long experience playing together. Even without a hit single, *Little Creatures* went gold after a couple of months. In an industry where commercial and artistic success rarely have anything to do with each other, Talking Heads remain a happy miracle.



"I've got a lot to resolve with this band. I haven't outgrown it yet. If I were to leave now, I would take what ever problems I experienced into my next arena unresolved and have exactly the same problems."

of how to interpret them. It's not necessarily the best one; it just happens to be *my* interpretation. I get very attached to it, and jealous of it, but someone else may do a better one. Naturally it's perceived that the words are coming from me, but they could just as well be coming from someone else. I would hope so, anyway. I would hope they could apply to other people's lives and not just mine. I have to relate it to my own life, find something to base it on. Some are more made up than others.

It's important to me how this stuff is perceived. Honestly, at the beginning I had no idea I appeared like a psychotic lunatic. I *still* don't think I look like Tony Perkins [*smiles*]. I just wasn't at all aware that was the impression I was giving. I was aware that my performance was not like other people's, but I didn't think that automatically made me into a psychotic [*laughs*], or nut case. Years later, listening back to the first record, I could see how truly strange it must have sounded at the time.

I felt the "egghead" reputation was an unfortunate thing thrust upon us. It implied that we weren't sincere about the feelings we were putting across in our songs, or generating in our performances. It was like saying, "These people are smart. And because they're smart they can't possibly be sincere about what they're doing." Which is just total bullshit. Smart people can be just as sincere as stupid people! [*laughs*] Smart people can be just as stupid as stupid people. We've gotten away from that a little bit now. Also, at the time we seemed *really* different from a lot of pop and rock acts. We were like an anti-rock band. Not because I don't believe in rock mythology, but because there are other people who do it better—people like Bruce Springsteen and Prince and Mick Jagger. All of us in the band figured, well, let's come up with something else.

I'm hoping to discover, as much as a lot of the people I write about, some way of living that resolves alienation. Sometimes I write about it, and sometimes I write about the possibility of relief from that, of communion or release. I think I touch both things in the spectrum. I'm having a better time in general, all the time [*smiles*]. Suffering can serve as a ground or inspiration. But when you're creating something you have to feel pretty strong and confident. Otherwise you wouldn't be so bold as to try to make something. If you feel miserable, you just feel like going to sleep, or crawling into a hole, or watching television. At least that's been my experience. At its root might be some disturbance. But when you're creating, you're feeling pretty good. This is what I believe! [*tosses lemon wedge into mouth*]

I think more and more I'm allowing myself to appreciate things I would have ignored otherwise, or overlooked. For instance, coming into this hotel room—whoops! lemon in my teeth—I would have said, "What a sterile, horrible environment." But then you can look at it the other way: Look at how this curtain is fastened so that it doesn't *really* drape like a curtain, and how it's made to match all the other furnishings in the room. You can think, that's kind of nutty and wacky; somebody had a nutty idea, and put it to work. In a funny way, if you look at just a detail like that, then it's really beautiful and eccentric. But if you look at it another way, it's kind of depressing. I'm trying to find the way that's more fun these days. I'm trying to find the beauty and fun in all this stuff.

Big Talk about Little Creatures

DAVID BYRNE: I started writing songs again. I'd never disliked "songs" so I just thought I'd give rein to my instincts. I felt the more traditional song format is nothing to be ashamed of; I like listening to them, so I thought I'd try writing some. I hadn't done anything in a long time and I found it fairly easy. That kind of song you write with a piano or guitar, maybe a rhythm box to keep you in tempo. Sometimes I just record on the little tape player I use onstage. I listen back to it on that, and then refine the structure more, or whatever. If it worked in that basic form then it became evident that it didn't really need a whole lot of embellishing. Too much added to it could ruin those kind of songs.

The band all felt exactly the same way when they heard the stuff: The way to work out was to rehearse as a band. So we all holed up in a rehearsal studio for about a month and just learned the songs, until by the end we could play them all through one after the other—like bar bands, or like we used to do. Although the songs are different than the ones we used to do, 'cause they have a different feeling and they're about different things, their simplicity is similar.

JERRY HARRISON: I think the influence of the *True Stories* project made David get very interested in indigenous American music. I think that influence made him think in terms of an individual singing a song more than this process approach we had used in the past. So it wasn't a big surprise. But I was very happy with it. It was nice to do things in the old way, but take the lessons we had learned from making *Speaking In Tongues* and *Remain In Light*. It's a very American album. The influences, rather than being third-world, are more old rock or Tex-Mex or Cajun.

"We were tired of everybody copping our licks. We just changed for the sake of change, doing songs that had more personal feeling."

CHRIS FRANTZ: It wasn't really a big shocker, but it was a pleasant surprise. There had been evidence from all of us that we were kind of tired of the way everybody was copping our licks! [*laughs*] It seemed apparent we were having a big influence—at least it appeared that way to us. So we decided to go in another direction. We'd been playing these long, extended grooves for quite some time, and it was fun to have a three- or four-minute song that was arranged the old-fashioned way. They aren't exactly old-fashioned songs, but they do have those elements. It was fun, and kind of relaxing to play that kind of music again. It had been a while. It was the first time I had ever played ride cymbal with Talking Heads. It doesn't sound very important, but little things like

"Before* Tom Tom Club, *if David suddenly for a whim – and he was always threatening it in his tantrums – said, 'I'm gonna break up the band,' we couldn't continue musically."

that make a difference. It was the first time I'd ever played a march beat all the way through a song. It was a real pleasure for me. Since most of the songs were three or four minutes, I didn't have to listen to a rhythm machine all the time; over six or seven minutes it's hard not to speed up or slow down. This time I could just play. Also, the songs were well-rehearsed before we went into the studio to record them, so it wasn't like you were standing at attention wondering what the next move would be. The idea was just to play well and sound convincing, rather than come up with fabulous new ideas, one after the other, at 200 bucks an hour [studio time].

TINA WEYMOUTH: We got together at the end of last year and talked about being a band again; after a tour, we pretty much disband. David played us some demos of him playing guitar and singing with a rhythm machine. Most of what he played for us were songs for *True Stories*, 'cause that was what he was into. We asked him, "Are you sure you want us to play them? You've already written the songs. Maybe you'd just like to hire some session people." 'Cause a lot of the songs were in the style of somebody else, not anything like Talking Heads—a song in Tex-Mex style, things like that. He said, "No, I'd like the band to play, 'cause I think you would do something more interesting." We said sure; I said yeah, I will if I can sing some more! [*laughs*] He said, "Great, I'm really interested in hearing harmonies."

We started rehearsing in January, and took a short break when Chris and I went down to the Rock in Rio festival in Brazil to play on half the B-52's set. When we came back we finished learning the songs, and worked together on the arrangements and harmonies. It was very pleasant. We weren't racking our brains to come up with something new rhythm-wise. We were just trying to make these songs have a good feeling in an authentic manner, so it wouldn't be a parody or jive.

At this point David had songs that didn't have to do with *True Stories*, and those became *Little Creatures*. After we learned them all, we recorded them. Then, as usual after the four of us record basic tracks, we asked other people to do things they can do really well—like Eric Weissberg can play pedal-steel and we can't!

BYRNE: Some of the songs were bits and pieces of things I had done over the past few years that didn't seem appropriate for the other things we were doing. I'd have a little piece of melody like [*hums "Road To Nowhere"*]. I didn't know what to do with it, so I'd hum it into a cassette recorder on a piece of tape and file it away as something I like. Some of those

GEORGE DUBOSE

got used. On the whole it was a burst of activity. But even though they're written in a burst, they're things that have been brewing over a period of time.

WEYMOUTH: I felt it was going back to the way we used to write songs, when David would say, "I've written a song in the style of Al Green," and then it would turn out to be "Happy Day" [on '77, Talking Heads' first album]: [*sings*] "Such a happy—*day*-ay-ay!" [*laughs*] There were some nice chord rubs. There were dissonances that, when we were learning to play, we avoided. So it was fun to go back to very simple rhythms, where the challenge was not so much to take the music to the next step, but to do it in an authentic style with real love for that style, and not mess it up. The magic is making it sound easy.

HARRISON: I love the feeling of rhythm, but I really like the sense of melody on the new album. Even though some people compare this to the first album—and it is similar to that in its concise song structures—it's very different in that this one is dominated by singing, melodies. It's really a new venture for us.

BYRNE: The new songs came easier. They're grounded in the culture I grew up with. Whereas the other things came about through a process of discovery, discovering other ways of making music. That way of making music, that has that ground or foundation, is pretty limitless. But I guess I just didn't feel like doing it again right away.

FRANTZ: We just changed for the sake of change, really. We wanted to do some songs that had a personal feeling to the band. The genre really didn't matter. We don't really think about being commercial. Once in a while we'll say, "Hey, this sounds like it can be a hit!" But when we think in those terms it almost never is. With the particular chemistry of our band, it seems that when things are commercial it happens in spite of us!

WEYMOUTH: We joked a lot about *Little Creatures*. We said, "This is our white album, ha ha ha." There was no black sound on it whatsoever. Funnily enough, when David started playing "Road To Nowhere," I said, "David, I'm just going to have to do the same bass rhythm as on 'Burning Down The House.'" When that song started, I was thinking of a Black Uhuru song; Robbie Shakespeare had played this *dum-diddit-dum*. Because Jerry and David never saw any reggae elements in it, they just played straight rock accents. The two merged without me and Chris ever mentioning it. When we saw Simple Minds in New Zealand last year, the bass player said to me, "I really like that lick. I'm gonna steal it for a song." And he did! But you don't even hear the lick in "Don't You (Forget About Me)" until there's a slight breakdown because it's really buried. "Road To Nowhere" just happened to have the same rhythm.

"Our 'egghead' reputation implied we weren't sincere. Which is just bullshit! Smart people can be just as sincere as stupid people. Smart people can be just as stupid as stupid people."

BYRNE: Warner Bros. picked "Road To Nowhere" as a single. I have no feelings about the matter. I don't have an instinct for singles. I think it's just as likely that some oddball little ditty would be a single as something that sounds like a real rouser.

WEYMOUTH: I would have thought the first single would be "And She Was." And I thought "Stay Up Late" would have had a good chance because it's so very Talking Heads, kind of raw. I was surprised. But I like that song.

GEORGE DUBOSE

"We're a band whose decision-making flows to the person who has the expertise. Since I play keyboards, I tend to be the one to straighten things out."

BYRNE: "Road To Nowhere"'s music is something to run counter to the lyrics.

WEYMOUTH: David loves everything Robin [Frantz and Weymouth's son] says. He's the only person who gets through David's armor, speaks exactly at his level: Say whatever you feel. Robin loves "Stay Up Late."

BYRNE: My consistent attitude about children and pets is they're something to touch or poke, to get a reaction.

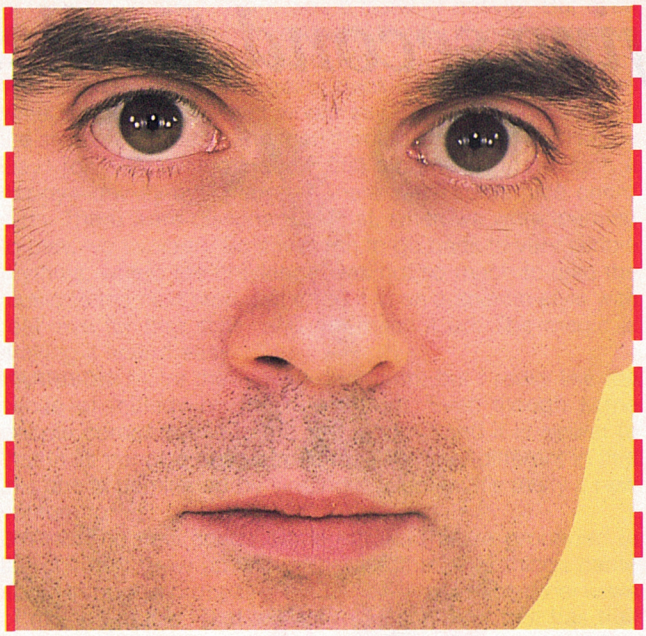
FRANTZ: I wrote the lyrics to "Perfect World" a long time ago. David found them filed, and changed them around a little bit to make them fit the song. He said I wrote them in 1974. He couldn't think of anything to work with a melody, so he used those.

BYRNE: "Perfect World" was meant to be metaphorical, people's activities or lives as songs. I can imagine somebody asking themselves, "Am I always going through the same routines?" I played it for Chris and boy, was he surprised.

FRANTZ: "The Lady Don't Mind" was written for *Speaking In Tongues*, when all the songs were written in the studio by the band. Then David wrote the lyrics later. We didn't like the arrangement, so we reworked it, made it a cha-cha.

WEYMOUTH: It's like a ladder being built: The vocals don't go on until the very end. David still gets the lion's share [of songwriting credit]. We break it down in thirds. Rather than fifty percent for the top-line melody, fifty percent for the lyrics, and the musicians get nothing, it was a fair way of doing it: one-third for the musical arrangements, one-third for the top-line melody, one-third for the lyrics. We each get one-fourth of one-third. I'm very happy to have eight percent of a song, because for years musicians have helped a person who came in with just a skeleton of a song. They've told him how to sing it, they've made suggestions and they still get no credit. This is a step in the right direction.

HARRISON: Because we've worked with people like Brian Eno, people never knew what I did and what Brian did. I



GEORGE DUBOSE

"Honestly, at the beginning I had no idea I appeared to be a psychotic lunatic. I still don't think I look like Tony Perkins."

would often get involved with harmonies when the basic idea was done through singing. I would write it down or put it on a keyboard so we could find if there was a conflicting note we just weren't hearing. As you build up more parts you have to be more rigid about it. Often when we would work out contrapuntal or harmonic relationships, because I play keyboards, I would be the person to say, "Wait a minute, something's going wrong," and I'd have to try to straighten it out. We're a band whose decision-making flows to the person who has the expertise.

Another reason people don't know what I do is that I play parts that often lie within a song, rather than stick out. I don't zero in on trying to be a virtuoso. With instruments like the DX7 and an Apple program, you have 500 sounds—and everyone in the world has those same great 500 sounds. You have to go to some other level to make the sounds interesting and new. I approach that usually by combining sounds so they have a different blend.

"Talking Heads is, for all intents and purposes, David's anchor in reality. It's his family, whether he hates it or loves it. It's what he keeps coming back to. It's where he feels comfortable."

BYRNE: On a couple of songs the band came up with more music than on others. But on the whole it was done in a real traditional way, like, "Here's the tune, now everybody make up their parts and we'll play." I think whatever resentment might have been harbored was offset by the great relief at playing simple songs.

WEYMOUTH: It had been so long since we had played. The only way we communicate as a band is by playing. The compliment was that, having written these songs, David could have gone and done his own solo record. But he chose to have the *wisdom* to use Talking Heads—which I think made all the difference.

BYRNE: The Heads seem like the best vehicle for the songs. I could see doing a record of songs I wrote that other people sang; there are lots of people I think have real expressive voices that could interpret something I wrote in a way I never could. But we have a lot of fun doing songs.

My solo activity has never threatened the group *per se*—I don't think, anyway. It's always been assumed the group would continue. One doesn't exclude the other.

Solo Self-Analysis

WEYMOUTH: We're not gonna try too hard this time with Tom Tom Club. Last time my baby was four months old. I was getting up in the middle of the night, and I was writing songs the day before they were to be recorded. It was too insane. The space we'd created for ourselves in 1981/82 was now occupied by a lot of people. So we had a little disappointment coming to us. We had competition.

HARRISON: My first solo album was basically thrown out to see what would happen to it. If I'd put together a band and toured playing those songs, it would have drawn more attention. Nowadays you could make a video. At that time, if you didn't tour or get a hit single, an album was going to die. The Tom Tom Club album was obviously more accessible and exciting to people. That was certainly a more commercial album, and a great record. Record companies are like people; they place their bets.

Some of *The Red And The Black* had been written before we made *Remain In Light*. When we got involved with this fascination of time against itself, I wanted to see how that would work in other time signatures besides 4/4. So I deliberately wrote songs from rhythm patterns. There are rhythmic experiments, but they are not *a priori* experiments, starting out with "I wonder if it's possible to do this."

My new album is a little more direct than the first. It relies more on singing and songwriting. The problem with my first record was that it took you a while to understand. I'm in a position that I need to have something that's successful. David deliberately makes albums, like *Knee Plays*, that are non-commercial or have a very limited audience. When I, or Chris and Tina, make an album, there's this need for it to have commercial success. We're in different positions. I want to be able to continue to make albums.

WEYMOUTH: The success of *Tom Tom Club* was such a surprise. We never really thought it would take off. There was a bittersweet sadness: We were sitting with David in a taxi when our manager told us *Tom Tom Club* had gone gold. We wanted to be happy, but it was as if a second child had outstripped a first child who was supposed to accomplish something first. It felt like, okay, we've got our foot in the door; now, whatever happens to us, we can still make a living making music. Before, if David suddenly for a whim—and he was always threatening it, in his tantrums—if he said, "I'm gonna break up the band," we couldn't continue musically. We wouldn't have any business clout, and we'd have to go back to selling hamburgers or something.

Having a hit is like a miracle. You just write music because you love it. It's very hard to believe it's all due to luck. I don't think there's any musician I know who honestly believes in his own abilities.

Our best stuff comes when we don't try too hard, when we don't try to make a heavy personal statement. That just gets in the realm of self-preoccupation. *Little Creatures* did a lot of the same things we were going after.

Heads, They Win

WEYMOUTH: *Little Creatures* is rebuilding the foundation. We had built a solid foundation stylistically, but we didn't understand it. We'd come up to this tottering pinnacle where there was no place to go after *Stop Making Sense*; the only thing we could do was a more expensive production, a bigger deal. It was all ludicrous. Here are all these other bands entering the funk-dance arena, and some of them are doing it better than us. So we'd better get the hell out and do something else, or we'll lose whatever it is that is unique to us. We gotta get back to our instincts. This was a good starting place. I expect we'll grow in another direction.

BYRNE: When we started playing the new songs, it was fun, real enjoyable. There was a real clarity to it that obliterated any irony [in reverting to a pop format].

WEYMOUTH: For us, all that was new. We didn't start as a band that knew how to play all that music and then reinvented it into a form. We just *were* the form, and we didn't know what it was. I remember David saying, "We want to sing like the Carpenters." We really thought we were writing trendy pop material on '77. This was the first time I'd ever played a country song. For us it *was* new, and it's new for the kids who've been raised on punk.

BYRNE: Our big effect on people, as I see it, is we're perceived as having success without compromise. That's a value people respect, and they don't see it very often. If you don't see it at all for a long time, you think it's not possible. All it takes is one instance for people to have faith in themselves, and to believe it's possible to live according to some set of values. That's *our* political statement.

WEYMOUTH: The band is, for all intents and purposes, David's anchor in reality. It's his family, whether he hates it or loves it; it's what he keeps coming back to. It's where he feels comfortable.

[*Pause*] I've got a lot to resolve with this band. I haven't outgrown it yet. If I were to leave this band now—forget all the other implications, like being a jerk to all our fans, etc.—it's very possible that whatever problems I experienced with the band I would take to my next arena unresolved and have exactly the same problems. I have to resolve these things with this band before I can grow to do something different. There's the potential for all of us to outgrow each other, but it hasn't happened yet. So far, the growth has occurred internally. As long as it keeps growing and doesn't hurt people—'cause growth is painful—it's a good thing and will continue. It has been, during this record and the last couple of records.

FRANTZ: We're all still too excited about being in a band to quit. If love of music is why you get into it, which is a good reason to be in a band, after ten years you're either still in love or you're not. We still are.

Creature Features

David Byrne played a Roland synthesizer guitar on the last Talking Heads tour. On *Little Creatures* he played mostly his 60s-vintage Fender Stratocaster. He plugs into a Roland Jazz Chorus amp; among his effects are an Ibanez Auto Filter ("it's neat, like an automatic wah-wah"), Boss digital delay and a compressor. "I haven't bought any new equipment in years," he admits, but "before we went on tour I bought an AMS digital reverb." Byrne writes on an Emulator, and has a Tascam four-track cassette recorder for his home-made demos.

Jerry Harrison uses an Emulator II, two Yamaha DX7s and "sometimes" a Prophet T8. He still has a Prophet 5 rev II; "unfortunately, no one's developed MIDI for that yet." The new album also includes a Hammond G3 organ, complete with a wood Leslie tone cabinet. In the string section, he has a Fender Telecaster, Stratocaster and "a couple of Roland synth guitars, but I haven't been using the synthesizer part of it very much lately." On the last tour Harrison patched his keyboards right into the monitor system. His guitar goes through a Roland JC-120. "I really like the sound of JBL speakers. I used those when I was in high school and I never saw any reason to change. We've used Gallien-Krueger amps too; for a solid-state amp, they are very well made. The JC-120 has problems in the studio 'cause it's so noisy, but it has that beautiful chorus effect. On *Little Creatures* we used a Music Man head and Marshall bottom for a lot of things."

Tina Weymouth still has her Veillette-Citron Standard bass, and a Hofner, strung with Dean Markleys. **Chris Frantz** still has his all-black, anodized Tama drum kit, with timbales, two rack toms (oversized and tuned low), and two Zildjian cymbals. His home kit, used with Tom Tom Club, consists of an eighteen-inch bass drum, rack tom, floor tom, snare, high-hat and cymbal. The Frantz/Weymouth domicile also includes a "top-of-the-line" Casio keyboard.

Little Creatures was recorded in New York at Sigma Sound Studios #5, on a Solid State Logic desk, with a Studio twenty-four-track recorder. Mixdown was on an Ampex ATR-100, at thirty i.p.s. Tape was Ampex 456. The album was also mixed on Sony digital equipment. Sigma has Fostex monitors, but engineer Eric Thorngren preferred the JBL 4311Bs and Yamaha NS-10s. The studio also has Lexicon 224-XL digital reverb, AMS RMX reverb and AMS DMX digital delay. Among the microphones used were Neumann U-87s and U-47s, Shure SM-57s, Crown PZMs and AKG 414s.

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